Potential outcomes of Brexit: a case of Hungarian migration

Gabor Lados[*1]

[1]University of Szeged (Hungary), Department of Economic and Social Geography – Hungary

Abstract

This paper deals with the possible consequences of Brexit in the context of Hungarian migration. Outmigration from post-socialist countries has intensified after the EU accession in 2004. Though the majority of migrants plan to stay abroad permanently, the number of returnees is also increasing. In general, decision for return could be experienced after a clear milestone (e.g. after some years spent abroad, or a certain amount of money earned in the foreign country), but Brexit might influence migration processes in Europe. Referendum about exit from the European Union changed the political, economic and social context of immigrants in the United Kingdom. By the end of March 2019 former migration channels in and out of the country will be significantly changed, and the majority of immigrants might move forward or return home. In terms of Hungarian emigration, United Kingdom is one of the most important destination countries, approximately 25% of total emigrants live there. After the referendum media draw the attention to a potential wave of returnees. This paper has two research questions: *i)* How did Hungarian migrants react to the results of the referendum? *ii)* What types of future scenarios do Hungarian migrants prepare for Brexit? The paper is based on content analysis of migrant blogs and in-depth interviews with Hungarian emigrants living in the UK. According to the results, migrants were controversial about the future. Mainly highly skilled migrants did not afraid of changes. They were confident about finding new jobs with their skills could be easy anywhere, and so had no alternative plans for a pessimistic future. On the contrary, those lower skilled ones who had not received permanent job contracts were more stressed about Brexit and more likely to return home.

Keywords: Brexit, Hungary, returnees, content analysis

[*]Speaker